

Here's yet another version of the highly successful Datsun 180B. It's the fully imported GX and . . .

# THE GX... It's better with air

And after 4000 km behind the wheel, A.J.VAN LOON decides, surprisingly, that there is little difference in finish between the locally assembled 180Bs and the fully imported model.

**L**ATE LAST YEAR Nissan quietly slipped a new version of its highly successful Datsun 180B on to the Australian market. Designated the GX the new, and from the outside hardly distinguishable, 180B has a higher trim level than the locally produced Deluxe and GL models and is imported into Australia fully built-up.

During the last few months of 1974 Nissan increased the number of its imported cars dramatically, because the local assembly plant just couldn't meet the demand. Now, with the question of import quotas hanging over the heads of the Japanese manufacturers, the company has stockpiled around 8000 cars for future sales — and most of them will sell for reasonable prices and ensure that Nissan will be able to maintain price stability over the next few months.

So the 180B GX is a car that has reached Australia because of the change in company policy — under normal circumstances (i.e., before Japanese cars achieved 40 percent of the local market) it is unlikely we would ever have seen it here.

Most of the changes in the car relate to passenger comfort — engine, drive train and suspension specifications are the same as before. It is available in two versions — with or without air-conditioning and with either a four-speed manual or three-speed automatic transmission.

WHEELS tested the first GX to be registered in New South Wales and we took delivery of the car from Capital Motors with only 28 kilometres on the clock. We returned the car with the speedo reading 4208 and during the test drove it over roads that ranged from the long flat stretches of the Hay plains to the twisty dirt of the Alpine Way.

Part of the exercise was to establish if the features that made the 180B top our Four Times Four two-litre sedan comparison (WHEELS, November, '74) proved themselves over the longer test, and to see if the shortcomings of the car had been improved. The trip across the Hay plains in summer heat also put the factory air-conditioning to the test in the best possible way.

When we collected the car the engine was still extremely tight and a good deal of the early part of the trip was spent running it in. For that reason performance figures were not run until we arrived back in Sydney and had about 4000 km on the clock. Adding air-conditioning to the car has upped the kerb weight by 25 kg (45 lb). More significant is the fact that the effort needed to turn the extra pulley and pump has robbed the engine of power and as a result the new 180B is slower to accelerate through the speed range.

It shows in the standing 400 m time of 19.3 seconds which is 0.7 sec slower than we clocked in the GL last year.

*Here comes the Datsun 180B GX. Featuring higher levels of trim than local assembled 180Bs, the GX is fully imported but differs outside only in grille, wipers and badges.*









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Mid-range acceleration times have also suffered, the 50 to 80 km/h in third gear now taking 7.6 seconds instead of the previous 6.8, while the important top gear 80-110 km/h passing manoeuvre will take 12.6 seconds instead of 10.9.

As a driver you are aware of this slower on-the-road performance. When accelerating past other vehicles you seem to spend a greater length of time hanging out there on the wrong side of the road and it requires much better anticipation of traffic patterns if you are not going to get caught.

It doesn't affect the maximum speed of the car and the GX was in fact faster than the GL, clocking an average of 163 km/h on a two way run. Speeds in gears for first and second remained the same at 58 and 98 km/h, though we had to get another 200 rpm out of the motor, at 6700 rpm, to do it. The higher revs at the same speeds were caused by the smaller rolling radius of the tyres — the GX being fitted with Japanese 165SR13 Dunlop SP Sport radials, the GL we tested having had A78S13 Dunlop Guardian cross plys.

In both third and top gears the GX performed 500 rpm better than the GL, third peaking at 6500 rpm and 145 km/h, but in both it took a long time to rev right out because of the tall gearing of the car.

The wide variety of conditions encountered during our test gave us a good opportunity to check the fuel economy, and how the air conditioning unit affected it. We half expected to obtain best economy on the long straights of the Hay plains, and worst in the twisty bits of the Alpine Way where third gear was used most of the time and second gear almost as much.

But it didn't turn out that way. The worst figure of 8.2 km/l (23 mpg) was obtained between Hay and Mildura cruising at 120 km/h with occasional bursts up to 140. The car had about 1000 km on the clock at this stage and could still have been a little tight, but what really knocked the economy into a hole was a head wind for most of the 298 km. The trip from Corryong to Cooma, along the Alpine Way, produced a better 8.7 km/l (24.5 mpg) but the best figure of 11.2 km/l (31 mpg) was obtained cruising from Cooma to Sydney at a restricted 100 km/h. Overall average for the whole test was 9.6 km/l (27 mpg) and that is better than the 8.6 km/l (24.6 mpg) we obtained during our Four by Four comparison, or the 9.2 km/l (25.9 mpg) gained during our first Datsun 180B test in September, 1972.

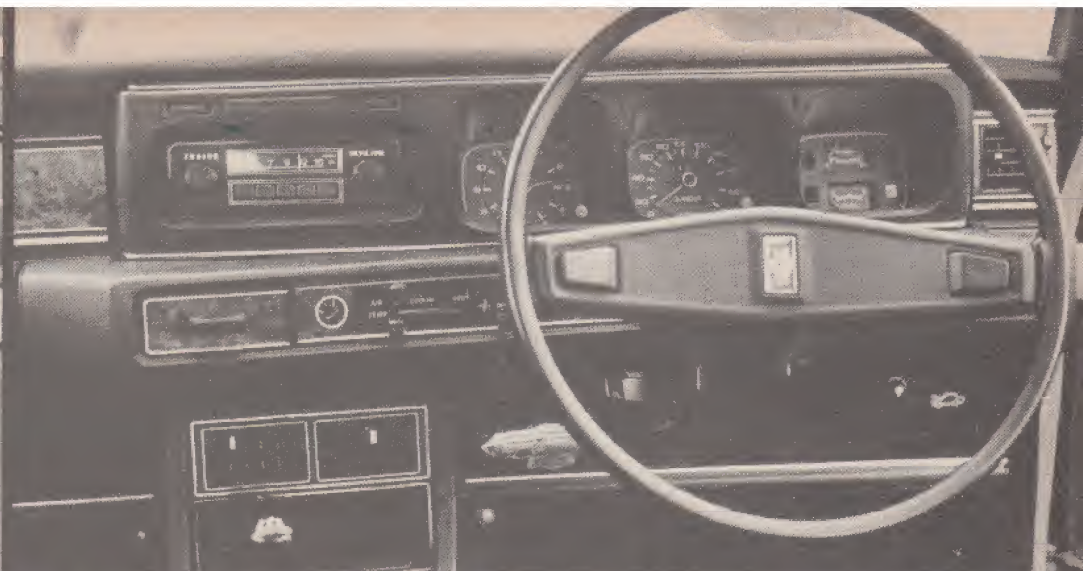
The high gearing of the Datsun helps produce good economy figures on the open road, but also meant more gearchanges in the mountains and around town. It is really because of the



Below: Near Balranald A. J. van Loon's camera catches the setting sun's rays reflecting off the car. Economy on 4000 km averaged 9.63 km/l (27 mpg).







Above: Dashboard remains unchanged though GX is fitted with gear lever console and has one important extra position, labelled COOLER, with heater/vent controls.





# THE GX...

## It's better with air

greater percentage of country running that the economy figures are so much better.

Road conditions encountered covered just about everything apart from logging tracks. Bitumen roads varied from the billiard table expressway conditions of the Hills Freeway through Adelaide's Mount Lofty Ranges, to the shocking bumps and holes of the Hume Highway and flood ravaged roads between Elmore and Shepparton in northern Victoria. There was also more dirt than I expected for, apart from the twisty and sometimes rough sections of the Alpine Way, there were a few sections of the Stuart Highway near Balranald where resealing was to take place. Here the dirt was smooth and wide and you didn't need to ease up at all from blacktop speeds.

Once again we were impressed by the Datsun's ability to absorb hard bumps and corrugations without throwing the car about, but were appalled by the vagueness of the front end. It all centred around the steering which was more vague than we remember in other test cars and which would not allow you to place the car accurately in corners. Capitol Motors assured us afterward that a simple matter of steering box adjustment had improved the steering somewhat but vagueness at the straight ahead is a recognised 180B fault (as WHEELS continually points out) and it is time it was done away with completely.

Apart from the considerable wheel

movement needed to keep the car pointing the right way on straight roads the fault also showed up badly where it became necessary to drive around a pothole in the apex of a corner. When travelling quickly the response was sometimes too slow with the result that the front wheel thumped through the hole. Roadholding is good, and better with radials than with cross-plys, and if you can find the road and remoteness to do it, the 180B can be chucked about with considerable enthusiasm.

But we didn't indulge because on the test car the brakes were terrible, fading out to almost nothing halfway down an eight kilometre hill near Khancoban while toodling down in third with fast driving farthest from our mind. Nissan Australia is mystified by this as 180B brakes are normally good and has referred the matter back to Japan.

In spite of all that the GX is a much more pleasant car to drive because of its improved accommodation. First, and foremost, of course, is the air conditioning which allows you to retreat from the world outside into your own little environment. It certainly is a boon when spending long periods behind the wheel as the cool, clean air keeps you alert and fresh for much longer than you would be without it.

It is quite amazing how much normal "fresh" air smells after you've spent considerable time in your refrigerated cocoon. Unfortunately the Nissan air conditioning is not quite up to coping with high summer heat when driving across western NSW with two people in the car, and the temperature around 35 degrees Celsius. The temperature inside slowly but surely rises until you begin to notice it is warm.

Having the fan on the second of four-speed settings helps keep the temperature down better than the

slowest (and quietest) speed which is unlike most other car air conditioners. We wondered if the refrigerated air is extracted to the atmosphere in greater volume than it is supplied at the lowest fan speed, thereby removing the in-cabin pressure of "air" and thus allowing normal outside air to filter in.

The "air" performed at its best in warm humid conditions, when it kept us wonderfully cool, and on the dusty Alpine Way where it kept the car clean inside. The unit itself is quite compact and features Nissan's new rotary pump.

Another feature of the GX is a three-way adjustable driving seat. Apart from the fore/aft and reclining back adjustments the driver's seat also has a squab that tilts up at the front to give added support under the thighs, improving the driving position.

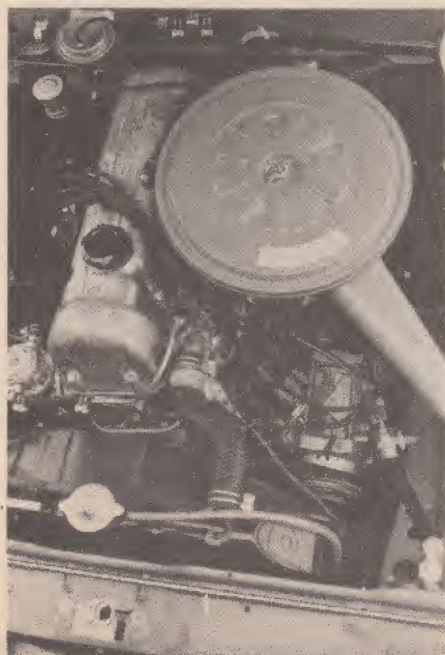
The seats have also been improved by the cloth trim inserts on the vinyl covers. This helps in retaining you in the seat, though there is still not enough lateral support for hard cornering. This is further compounded by the poor seat belt support as the sash mounting points are too far forward — a legacy of trying to make rear doors reasonably wide — and with the driver's seat right back and on full tilt offers NO restraint whatsoever for the whole length of the sash. You might as well be wearing a lap strap for all the use the sash is.

Driving controls and instruments are all as before with a stalk for indicators, dip and flash, wiper and headlight switches still on the dash and dash dials for a clock, speedo (with trip meter), temperature and fuel. Visibility is good, thanks to the high driving position but at first, after not having driven a 180B for a while, the car felt high, narrow and unstable — which it isn't.

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Engine is same trusty 78.3 kW (105 bhp) four as before — difference lies in neat air conditioning unit slung alongside.

Big feature of improved interior is cloth upholstery and driver's seat which tilts backward (compare seat runners) for increased thigh support.







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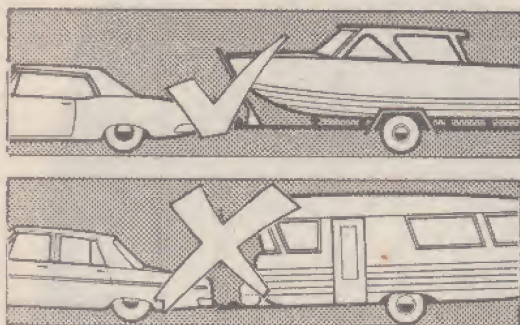
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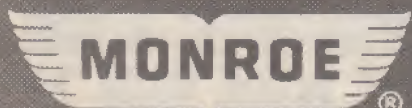
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The dash itself has all sorts of nooks and crannies for storing bits and pieces — there is even a slot to the right of the wheel for putting coins that may be needed for bridge or expressway tolls. Unfortunately some of the trays are unusable because they are so small or don't stop objects flying out. Other criticism may be levelled at the heater/air conditioning controls, which are not illuminated, and the lack of a glovebox light. But a heated rear window is now standard.

A Datsun 180B owner in Adelaide complained to us about the poor ventilation of the model, saying he much preferred his old Datsun 1600. When relying on the normal force-fed ventilation we found that it does not come through with a sufficiently strong blast. The new car did not come up to scratch in heating, though, needing the heater on full for any real effect.

Noise is the single biggest thing that turns us against the 180B. Wind noise comes in at 100 km/h and the engine starts roaring like a wounded bull not long after. Actual areas of wind noise vary according to which way the wind is blowing but the A-pillar mounted radio aerial has a good deal to do with disturbing the air flow around the side of the car. Putting up with this noise while cruising at 100-140 km/h (which it will do happily all day) is the most tiring part of driving the car.

We were surprised that the overall finish of the car was not better than that of locally assembled cars — we've come to expect that Japanese cars are better but with the GX it is not. Paint was only average.

All the same the GX is an improvement over the GL and at \$4114 without, or \$4682 with "air", looks good on today's high price market.

How many GXs will be (or already have been) imported into Australia we don't know, but it's likely that it is only a temporary phenomenon because when the Federal Government finds a way to nip imports in the bud the GX will probably disappear — and that would be a shame. \*

## DATSUN 180 B GX

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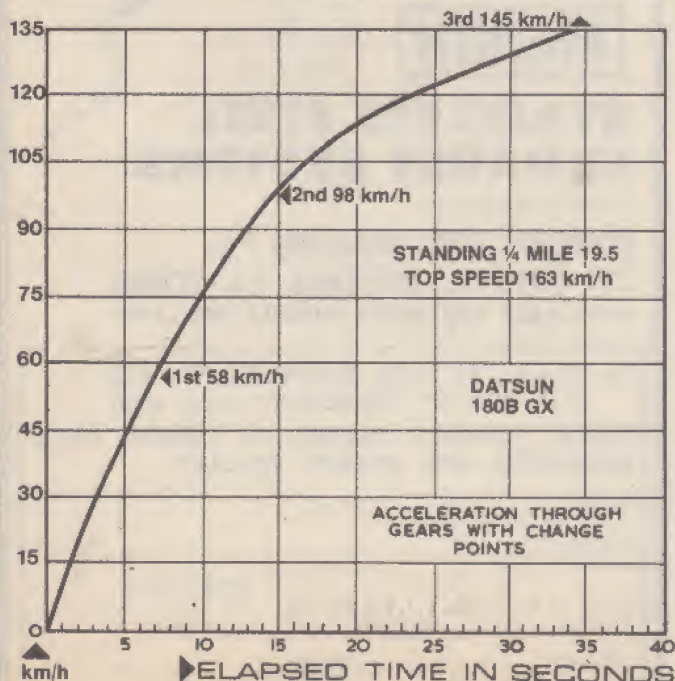
## DATSUN 180B GX

### SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE	DATSUN
MODEL	180B GX
BODY TYPE	Four door sedan
COLOR	Tan
Price, Basic	\$4682
As tested	\$4767
OPTIONS FITTED	Mats (\$15), Mudflaps (\$25), Protector strips (\$45)
ENGINE:	
Cylinders	Four, in-line
Valves	Overhead cam
Carburettor	Nikki two-barrel
Fuel pump	Mechanical
Oil Filter	Full flow
Compression ratio	8.5 to 1
Bore x stroke	85 x 78 mm (3.35 x 3.07 in.)
Capacity	1.77 litres (107.97 cu in.)
Power, at 6000 rpm	78.3 kW (105 bhp)
Torque, at 3600 rpm	147 N-m (108.5 lb/ft)
TRANSMISSION:	
Type	Manual, four speed, all synchro
Clutch	Single dry plate
Gear lever location	Floor
RATIOS:	

	Gearbox	Overall	km/h per 1000 rpm	mph per 1000 rpm
First	3.383:1	12.52:1	8.66	5.38
Second	2.013:1	7.44:1	14.58	9.06
Third	1.312:1	4.85:1	22.37	13.90
Fourth	1.00:1	3.70:1	29.32	18.22
Final Drive	3.70:1			

CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR:	
Construction	Unitary
Suspension, front	Independent, MacPherson struts, coils, anti-roll bar
Suspension, rear	Independent, semi trailing arms, coils



Dampers	Telescopic
Steering type	Recirculating ball, 15.0:1
Turns lock to lock	3.7
Turning circle	9.8 m (32.2 ft)
Steering wheel diam	394 mm (15.5 in.)
Brakes, type	Disc, drum
DIMENSIONS:	
Wheelbase	2500 mm (98.4 in.)
Track, front	1310 mm (51.6 in.)
Track, rear	1320 mm (52.0 in.)
Length	4215 mm (13 ft 9.9 in.)
Width	1600 mm (5 ft 3 in.)
Height	1405 mm (4 ft 7.3 in.)
Fuel tank capacity	55 litres (12.13 gallons)
Kerb mass (weight)	1025 kg (2260 lb)
TYRES:	
Size	165 SR 13
Pressure, front/rear	193/193 kPa (28/28 psi)
Make fitted	Dunlop SP Sport
GROUND CLEARANCE:	185 mm (7.3 in.)

### PERFORMANCE

TEST CONDITIONS:	
Weather	Overcast
Surface	Castlereagh Dragway
Load	Two
Fuel	Super
Power-to-mass (kerb)	13 kg/kW (21.5 lb/bhp)
Piston speed at max power	935.7 m/min (3070 ft/min)
Odometer start	0028 km (17.5 miles)
Odometer finish	4208 km (2613)

SPEEDOMETER ERROR:	
Indicated km/h	50 70 90 110 130
Actual km/h	51 70 90 110 125

FUEL CONSUMPTION ON TEST: Distance and Conditions.	
Best	11.16 km/l (31.43 mpg) over 513 km (319 miles)
Worst	8.19 km/l (23.07 mpg) over 298 km (185 miles)
Average	9.63 km/l (27.13 mpg) over 3776 km (2345 miles)

MAXIMUM SPEEDS:	
Fastest run	168 km/h (104 mph)
Average all runs	163 km/h (101 mph)

IN GEARS:	
First	58 km/h (37 mph) (6700 rpm)
Second	98 km/h (61 mph) (6700 rpm)
Third	145 km/h (90 mph) (6500 rpm)
Fourth	168 km/h (104 mph) (5700 rpm)

ACCELERATION: Through the gears:	
0-50 km/h	5.4 sec
0-70 km/h	8.6 sec
0-90 km/h	12.7 sec
0-110 km/h	18.4 sec
0-130 km/h	27.3 sec

	Second	Third	Fourth
30-60 km/h	4.7 sec	8.7 sec	13.0 sec
40-70 km/h	5.0 sec	8.4 sec	11.7 sec
50-80 km/h	5.1 sec	7.6 sec	10.6 sec
60-90 km/h	5.6 sec	7.2 sec	10.2 sec
70-100 km/h	7.7 sec	8.4 sec	11.5 sec
80-110 km/h	—	8.4 sec	12.6 sec
90-120 km/h	—	9.2 sec	14.0 sec
100-130 km/h	—	12.0 sec	14.7 sec
110-140 km/h	—	14.8 sec	16.8 sec

STANDING START : 0-400 m (0-1/4 mile):	
Fastest run	19.3 sec
Average all runs	19.5 sec